

**Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council;
Response of the Designated State Unit; and
Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations
For 2007-2008**

- 1. SRC recommends that AZRSA clarify during initial client contact that the goal of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR) is employment and clearly indicates the ramifications related to accepting services and the potential impact on an individual's benefits.**

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. AZRSA continues to work with all staff to clarify and reiterate the mission of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program early on and throughout the process of consumer involvement. All AZRSA consumers are encouraged to attend Benefits Counseling that is available throughout the state to determine how employment would affect their benefits. Further, AZRSA is developing new marketing materials which clearly reflect the vision and mission of the program. They will be available to consumers throughout all stages of the process. Consumers are also given a copy of the Owner's Guide to Work, which is another tool that explains the program. Available on our website are Frequently Asked Questions, which also discusses these topics. They will be updated in the coming year to include more detailed information especially in the area of benefits counseling.

- 2. SRC recommends that AZRSA improve and expand marketing and outreach of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.**

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. As stated above, AZRSA is developing new marketing materials (such as brochures, DVD's and posters) which clearly reflect the mission and vision of the program. These materials will be used in all outreach efforts throughout the state, and the AZRSA website will be continuously updated to become more user-friendly and accessible.

In addition, AZRSA has begun to hold consumer focus groups to introduce key staff in local communities. AZRSA will continue holding these meetings in all areas of the state. These groups are an important avenue to tailor marketing and outreach activities specific to each local area.

Currently, AZRSA collaborates with other Department of Economic Security administrations during job fairs, career expos and community outreach activities. Further, AZRSA has also expanded its marketing and outreach efforts towards transition students utilizing individual district actions plans.

- 3. SRC recommends AZRSA should review and analyze the Arizona Triennial Statewide Needs Assessment (SNAP) data to address service gaps, service delivery**

patterns and make necessary changes to meet the needs of unmet and underserved individuals with disabilities statewide.

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. AZRSA discusses these issues in Section 4.11(d) of this State Plan. This needs assessment in coordination with other surveys, staff and consumer feedback, is being used in addressing service delivery gaps and areas needing further development.

- 4. SRC recommends AZRSA assist schools (Kindergarten through grade12 and higher education), One-Stops, employers and other access points, to improve disability awareness, needed accommodations and self advocacy skills.**

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. AZRSA will continue to work with all of its councils to promote disability awareness, needed accommodations and self-advocacy.

In relation to the transition of youth to higher education and/or adult living, AZRSA is cooperatively working with other State agencies as partners in the Arizona Transition Leadership Team (ATLT). All of the partners on the ATLT jointly support the development of local transition teams to increase community awareness and work for better outcomes for youth. It is AZRSA's hope that more of these local Youth Transition teams can be established.

The One Stop navigator program continues to provide the recommended awareness and assistance within the One Stop centers. In addition to these efforts, AZRSA also plans to utilize the marketing opportunities discussed under Item #2.

- 5. SRC recommends AZRSA develop and implement a mechanism to ensure that supervisor continue ongoing staff training regarding quality customer service.**

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. Efforts are underway to meet with key program and field staff to develop ways to enrich the training curriculum for employees in a variety of areas which includes customer service. One of the methodologies being considered is the development of follow up training by supervisors once staff have completed the CORE training curriculum. AZRSA values quality customer service and strives to uphold that value. Further training in the quality customer service area will be pursued in the coming year. Monitoring, program evaluation, and local meetings by management staff with consumers are other ways AZRSA hopes to learn whether quality customer services are being provided. AZRSA management is committed to use all of these tools to improve the quality of services received by consumers of AZRSA programs.

- 6. SRC recommends AZRSA facilitate improved communication between VR counselors and service providers.**

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. AZRSA has surveyed all AZRSA staff to determine how effective AZRSA is in communicating. Based on the information received, AZRSA will develop various mechanisms for communication with providers and counselors.

AZRSA has recently reinstituted the Community Provider Forums that encourage providers from around the state to join together on a quarterly basis to discuss issues relevant to their programs as well as any concerns or questions that they might have. AZRSA staff are in attendance at these meetings. The exchange in information between AZRSA and Community Providers will facilitate better understanding of the program and its policies and procedures. AZRSA will continue to pursue enhanced communication between counselors and service providers through joint training opportunities and other avenues.

7. SRC recommends AZRSA develop strategies to streamline the VR Program orientation process.

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. AZRSA is reviewing the current orientation process in an effort to determine what best meets the needs of the consumers and to make access to the VR program more equitable and expeditious for all consumer populations. Marketing materials are also being developed in an effort to provide consumers with a variety of opportunities to learn about the VR process. Additionally, the forms used for the intake process will also be reviewed for possible redesign to become more use-friendly and accessible.

8. SRC recommends AZRSA pursue the continuous monitoring and improvements outlined in the Federal Corrective Action Plan.

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. In response to FFY 2003/2004 107 Report, AZRSA has developed a corrective action plan which is currently being implemented. Implementation Steps are monitored by the AZRSA Executive Management Team.

9. SRC strongly recommends AZRSA continue collaborative efforts regarding the provision of services to transitioning youth in order to refine and expand service delivery options as it relates to the VR Program and the Department of Education policy/procedures. This should include Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funded schools, charter schools and any other applicable entities.

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. AZRSA will continue to collaboratively work with the Arizona Department of Education and its entities to expand service delivery options as it relates to transition. AZRSA will continue to instruct staff about the VR

4.2(c) Summary of SRC Input and Recommendations

Program's obligation to provide transition services to all students who need such services, as required by law. AZRSA will follow-up regarding BIA schools and charter schools in relation to transition services.

10. SRC recommends AZRSA continue to re-evaluate the effectiveness of its Establishment Grant process including criteria of awarding, sustainability, and evaluation of the results.

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. Current Establishment Grants have been evaluated for their effectiveness and success and have either been terminated or continued. AZRSA has changed the manner in which Program Development Grants have been awarded and are now in alignment with Federal requirements.

11. SRC recommends AZRSA conduct and share results of the Client Satisfaction Survey, focus groups and public hearings statewide with SRC, VR counselors and supervisors to further enhance and expand program options and quality of services.

Agency Response

AZRSA accepts all of these recommendations and plans to implement them. Currently, AZRSA is developing a matrix tool to chart all of the needs identified by needs assessments, staff, councils and consumers. This will be used to plan services to groups as well as expand program options to meet service delivery gaps and achieve a greater quality of service.

12. SRC recommends AZRSA continue its efforts to increase employee satisfaction and reduce staff turnover.

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation. AZRSA continues in its efforts to increase employee satisfaction and reduce staff turnover. The State Administrator has selected the topic of Recruitment and Retention to be the focus of a study by AZRSA students enrolled in the Post Employment Training in Rehabilitation Administration (PETRA). Additionally, AZRSA has a staff member who is on the 33rd Institute of Rehabilitation Issues on Recruitment and Retention of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. The findings of these two studies will be reviewed and discussed for possible implementation in AZRSA.

13. SRC recommends AZRSA evaluate implementation of Performance Based Contracting to determine the impact it has on system outcomes in comparison to current contracting methodology.

Agency Response

AZRSA plans to do the recommended evaluations. An evaluation component has been developed for the Performance Based Contracting pilot project for Employment

Services. That information will be used to assist AZRSA in implementing Performance Based Contracting throughout AZRSA.

- 14. SRC recommends AZRSA ensure that Federal Standards and Indicators related to employment outcomes are passed per federal guidelines.**

Agency Response

AZRSA agrees with this recommendation and remains committed to providing the resources for all Federal Standards and Indicators to be met or exceeded.